Level 179 - "Thrift for the Lost and Found"

rating: +16 + - x

The Freetrade Store: Open 24/7

The store where every lost item finds its home again;

Where every old tool finds new use;

A place that urges the populace to reuse, not waste;

The **Freetrade Store** finds a home for all products, no matter their wear, tear, or history.



What's old becomes new again.

SURVIVAL DIFFICULTY:
Class 0

- **Safe**
- **Secure**
- **Devoid of Entities**

Description



Many racks of repurposed clothes within Level 179.

Level 179 is an indeterminate litany of large rooms, tightly packed with old, second-hand items similar to a charity/thrift shop. Though the rooms take on many shapes, the level is never non-Euclidean, despite the often obtuse perimeters of the rooms themselves. With a construction of mostly plaster, beige paints, and grey floors, the rooms—even with unique clothing and other on-sale items—can look incredibly similar to one another. However, differences in colour, lighting arrangements, ceiling heights, and other details can help distinguish rooms from rooms—and by extension—help with navigation across the level.

Although each room of Level 179 is packed with racks and shelves of various items, the contents of each room is usually clothing of virtually all forms from any area from Earth. However, it is not uncommon to find CDs, DVDs, cassettes, books, children's toys, furniture, electronics, and even cutlery & dishware, although these items are kept within the perimeters of only certain rooms. Clothing—being the main product of Level 179—is displayed openly on various clothes racks, folded on tables, and on occasion, placed on mannequins, so that it can be openly advertised the garments to any visitors, and encourage them to make purchases.[1] Any clothing, or indeed any item, is replaced upon purchase by another similar item after approximately 10 minutes. This only occurs for items which are bought, as items that are only removed from their place and not purchased do not get replaced, and are instead teleported back to their place if abandoned by the person who displaced them.[2]



An image of Level 179 displaying another facet of what can be purchased within it.

Purchasing items is a relatively easy process, despite the fact that no instructions on how to do so are written anywhere within the level. Occasionally, one may find large, windowless vending machines with a large hole on one side where food & drink would typically be dispensed from. Simply inserting any item that fits within this slot will cause said item to dissipate, after which various white pieces of card displaying any multiple of 5 between 5 and 20 will dispense out from a smaller, thin opening. These numbers share a direct correlation to plain white tags found on all purchasable items in Level 179, which list a predetermined integer which bears a resemblance to the pricings of items within British charity/thrift stores. Ripping these tags off of the item they originate from has proven impossible, as the plastic hooks which connect the tag to the material is kept in an unbreakable state until it is removed from the level—an effect which carries over to all purchasable items in Level 179.

Due to a lack of any counters to purchase with, one must simply have this level's currency anywhere on

their person in order for a purchase to be successful. Without having these items on oneself, passing through the semi-common exits of the level[3] whilst carrying any of Level 179's items will be prevented by an unknown, completely unstoppable force which can only be negated by having cards that add up to an equal or greater sum than the numbers on the tags of all items one is trying to take. Upon leaving the level with one's items and a sufficient amount of Level 179's currency, any excess cards will remain on oneself. However, the amount of money one needs to actually leave the level with their items will dissappear when exiting.[4]



A corner of a room, packed with old clothes and bags.

While lacking definite proof, it is heavily believed that Level 179's items all come from other wanderers across the Backrooms. These items are theorised to come from the deceased, although it is especially possible—given the other items on sale—that certain items are those that had gone missing or been abandoned, with reasons ranging from sudden migration, death, a raid on one's home, or indeed just being forgotten by its owners.

Despite the aforementioned lack of proof, individuals from all sects of the Backrooms have been known to go to Level 179 in hopes of finding clothes that look similar to dead or missing individuals in hopes of reclaiming items from the people they knew. As well as this, many individuals often leave sticky notes on certain items for other individuals to recognise what items may have belonged to who. These acts are done either for general commemoration, or instead to inform other individuals—mainly people the creators of the notes know—of what items may have belonged to whom.

Level 179 lacks any form of staff that may be expected within other levels that have active trade,[5] and as such, it is impossible to know where exactly the abundance of seemingly second-hand stock comes from, or how exactly it reaches Level 179 without anyone present to operate it.[6] It is also theorised under the above hypothesis that clothes are repaired and cleaned when brought to Level 179, which would in-turn explain why none are ever torn nor dirty should they have come from a deceased individual.

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Whilst tests have previously been enacted to test the validity of Level 179's leading hypothesis on how it functions, those tests have elected to be discontinued. This, while having been decided for a multitude of internal reasons, has been enacted mainly due to the questionable ethical implications that continued experimentation would bring.

From as early as 2000, various former groups have conducted various experiments to see if Level 179's items coming from elsewhere in the Backrooms is true, mainly through leaving sewn-in marks or small items within random items they leave across different levels. However, simply leaving random items has constantly resulted in a lack of positive results, usually because the items are never stolen, or if they appear to be then they do not appear to end up within Level 179.

Talks between former groups, especially within minor level-specific groups, has oftentimes led to the idea that the usage of actual bodies could be used to test the hypothesis which multiple groups have previously come to. However, rather thankfully, no group has gone to such lengths for the sake of science.

After the most recent mass-merging, the M.E.O.D. has officially put an indeterminate ban on any further testing with Level 179, a law which covers anything from the investigation of the vending machines to the hotly debated core mechanic of the level. This is not only to condone and stop any future experimentation which would be considered illegal, but also to leave the only remaining unconglomerated group within Level 179 to remain as it is in peace so they may be able to continue their work in the way they have.

Bases, Outposts and Communities

The Freetrade Store



Original imagery of The Freetrade Store, dating back to 1993.

The Freetrade Store, a name self-given by its leaders, is a small collection of friends and family who have lived within Level 179 as early as 1992. Reportedly having moved to Level 179 to escape a "war", this group of close-knit individuals pride themselves as the level's volunteers and upkeepers in the face of a lack of actual staff.

These individuals are quick to give information to those requiring it, usually in the form of explaining the level's functions to any new faces that enter the level, or quelling any frustrations that come from people trying to leave the level without the sufficient amount of money.[7] As one would expect, they are extremely helpful by virtue of their main goal, although they are not hesitant to try and remove certain individuals that are more unruly or violent.[8]

Their altruistic and helpful manner stems from the fact that the Freetrade Store are believers in the idea that all of Level 179's items are either lost items, or come from the deceased. Whilst it is not something they can innately confirm nor deny—especially given their lack of scientific equipment—it is an idea the Freetrade Store follow deeply and instil onto new travellers and their own children. Because of this belief, the Freetrade Store's population have always been willing to trade excess food, old clothes, unneeded items, and whatever else they may not need instead of unnecessarily keeping it on themselves, or at the very least, they attempt to find new uses for their now unneeded items. This way of life is also something the group encourages to anyone they talk to who ends up in the level, and is also a general motto they spread via flyers they leave at various M.E.O.D. and unconglomerated communities.

Despite the better communication, living arrangements, food, and more that would come from conglomerating, the Freetrade Store has never accepted becoming a subsidiary to the M.E.O.D. This wish has been honoured ever since the formation of the M.E.O.D., even with the newest influx of conglomerates, a decision which has been upheld to keep the core message of the Freetrade Store alive.

Entrances And Exits

Entrances into Level 179, while not exactly common, are often rather easy to come across, and at the very least easy to spot. Each entrance into Level 179 takes on the form of the exterior of some kind of charity or thrift store, usually ones seen in either the US or the UK.

Each entrance to Level 179 leads wanderers to a direct, fixed point of the level, which can then be directly exited out from after. Despite this, however, the outside appearance of the entrance does not directly correlate to the inside of Level 179 itself, mainly due to a lack of any windows in the level which may exist on the entrance. Upon going through the entrance, the way back will simply appear as a regular door, painted in the same wall colour as the room one ends up in.

Below is a list of levels in which entrances to Level 179 can be found, as well as what they may take the appearance of.



An entrance to Level 179 from Level 33.



Another entrance to Level 179, this time found in Level 420.

- Access from Level 11 is easily attainable, should one avoid its large array of other exits, by entering any form of charity shop found on the ground floor of any of its larger buildings.
- Within Level 33, individuals can find charity or thrift stores exclusively within the non-corroded portions of the level.
- Some of Level 36's "real life businesses" may resemble that of UK charity corporations.[9] Going into the stores for these companies will lead to Level 179.
- Similar to Level 36, finding stalls in Level 82 that resemble actual UK charity company shops will cause wanderers to end up in Level 179 if entered.
- Opening the shutter of a closed store in Level 102 or Level 224 that has a facade reading "charity" will transport one to Level 179.
- Within Level 167, Level 207, Level 215, and Level 990, one can find abandoned charity storefronts with seemingly pristine interiors, which all send wanderers to Level 179.
- Right next to the main chip shop on Level 209 in the north direction is a seemingly active charity shop that leads to this level.
- Within Level 420, far away from the main radioactive lake, exists a singular pet-store themed charity shop. Setting foot in this building will take wanderers into Level 179.

Author(s)

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Footnotes

1. How to make said purchases detailed further below.
2. This happens within the same approximate 10 minutes as if the item were purchased.
3. Which are detailed in the entrances and exits portion of the article.
4. Should the total of all items bought not equal a multiple of five to match the rule of the level's currencies, more money is withdrawn from oneself.
5. Such as Level 82.
6. Assuming that the current leading hypothesis about where the clothing comes from is even accurate.
7. Something which, according to the Freetrade Store, happens rather frequently.
8. Something which is also stated to happen rather frequently.
9. Such as the British Heart Foundation or Barnardos.

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